



Childhood Connections

December 2, 2021

Thank You for Sharing 2021 With Us!



As we come to the end of 2021, on behalf of the Office of Childhood, we want to say thank you for sharing an exciting and eventful year with us! If someone told us a year ago where we would be today, I'm not sure we would have believed it.

Yet here we are, so let's imagine where we want to be another year from today. This year was only the beginning, together we can accomplish so much more.

As we head into a new year, we're so grateful for the parents, professionals, and communities across Missouri who are working together to make a positive impact for Missouri's children. Thanks to all of you, their future is bright.

Our warmest wishes to you and yours for a happy holiday season.

Sincerely,
Pam Thomas
Assistant Commissioner, Office of Childhood

Proposed Rule Changes — Comment Period

The Office of Childhood (OOC) filed its first series of rule changes with the Secretary of State's office and Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. Child care providers and stakeholders are encouraged to review the proposed rule changes on the [Rules & Laws webpage](#) and complete a [brief survey](#) to submit comments.

As a reminder, the proposed rules **do not** include changes that would affect the current day-to-day practices of child care providers or departmental staff. The proposed rules update the department name to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and update outdated terminology and forms within rules.

Updated CDC COVID-19 Guidance for ECE Programs



Child Care Director Certification/Approval

Do you have questions about the process for child care director certification and/or approval? If so, we encourage you to [visit and bookmark this certification webpage](#). We recently revamped this site to include more information, instructions, links to forms, and information on who to contact if you have questions about a

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its [COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#). Updates to the guidance emphasize the importance of universal masking for everyone ages two and older, regardless of vaccination status. Additionally, this guidance provides more information on screening testing and updated guidance for fully vaccinated staff. Early care and education (ECE) programs can promote vaccinations among staff and families, including pregnant women, by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices.

The updated guidance outlines strategies for ECE programs to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Although fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick, and spread the virus to others. CDC's [science brief on transmission in schools](#) includes scientific evidence about the spread of the virus among children and in school and ECE settings.

Stakeholder Engagement Request — First Steps Annual Performance Report

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) established the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) which is a series of “indicators” designed to measure results for children and families served in Missouri’s Part C Early Intervention Program known as First Steps. The Office of Childhood engages with Missouri stakeholders to set annual targets or goals for these indicators, to analyze data, to develop improvement strategies, and evaluate the progress. DESE will conduct a series of focus groups to share information with stakeholders and gather feedback. You can register for the [two upcoming dates here](#).

Regional Hub Map Update

The [Regional Hub Map](#) was recently updated to include the current status of community leaders who have been identified to assist DESE with hub readiness activities. Community leaders include one individual representing the public school perspective

particular step in the process.

Training For Families

Protective factors are strengths and resources that families draw upon during difficult times. Protective factors help promote optimal development by helping families succeed and thrive, even in the face of risks and challenges. In this free training, parents will learn ideas for increasing the "connection" with their child, strategies to deal with challenging behaviors, and tips for "bouncing back" from life's stressors. View this flyer to [register for the December 9 training and learn more](#).

Training and Professional Development Opportunity

The [Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals](#) offers home visiting professionals the opportunity to learn new skills and to continue growing in their careers with engaging online modules, a personalized learning map, and [Rapid Response Virtual Home Visiting](#) recorded webinars. The modules and webinars cover a variety of topics and, include helpful resources. All institute modules are based on the National Core Competency Framework.

and another individual who provides a community-based services perspective. Several areas of Missouri (identified in red and yellow on the map) are in need of community leaders. If you are interested in becoming a community leader, reach out to the DESE Hub Contact assigned to the proposed hub area before **December 15th**.

Early Childhood Development Program — Rule Update

Following the passage by the State Board of Education in the September 2021 meeting, the Missouri Early Childhood Development program rule was reviewed by the Missouri legislative Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) in November. JCAR requested clarification from OOC regarding the proposed rule revision. In response, the OOC has withdrawn the rule submission in order to address the JCAR request. The OOC will resubmit the rule to the State Board of Education at a later date.

Heating and Cooling Bills Assistance is Now Available Year-Round

The Department of Social Services announced that the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Energy Assistance (EA) program will now be available to help Missourians with their heating and cooling bills year-round and the benefit amount will double for those who are eligible. For help through EA, the new benefit amount will depend on the fuel type as listed below:

Fuel Type	Benefit Amount
Natural Gas	\$652
Tank Propane	\$990
Electric	\$636
Fuel Oil	\$652
Wood	\$438
Kerosene	\$306
Cylinder Propane	\$354

Any individual who received help through EA beginning October 1, 2021 is eligible for this increase. If a benefit has already been issued, a new benefit will be issued to cover the additional amount. For example, if a \$318 benefit for help with

Training and Professional Development Opportunity

Dr. Diane H. Craft, the author of Active Play! Fun Physical Activities for Young Children and national expert in early childhood physical activity, will host a virtual webinar, in partnership with DHSS, over physical activities to enhance infants' movement and brain development, easy-to-lead physical activities for toddlers, and ideas for structuring toddler environments for movement success. You can register for [the webinar here](#). For more information, please view the [flyer here](#).

Kindergarten Entry Assessment Pilot

The OOC is conducting a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Pilot. Visit our website for more information about the KEA [Pilot](#) and [school readiness information](#).

Family Child Care Network (FCCN) Networking Opportunity

FCCN is offering a pilot project to licensed family child care programs in Missouri with the following goals:

- Increasing peer networking opportunities for support and encouragement

an electric bill was paid, the remaining \$318 will be paid.

In addition, the maximum benefit amount through the Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) will be \$1,600 for Winter ECIP (previously \$800) and \$1,200 for Summer ECIP (previously \$600).

To apply for help, Missourians will need to compete and submit a [LIHEAP Application](#) and any documents the application asks for to your [local contracted agency](#) by mail or online. For more information about LIHEAP and the services available, visit this [DSS website](#)

Child Care Subsidy Providers — Child Absences

For children authorized for child care subsidy for any date between September 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021, the OOC will pay for additional absences through the typical monthly subsidy payment. The intent for these additional subsidy payments is to use relief funds to pay based on authorization since children are experiencing increased COVID absences during this time. Please note there will be no additional extensions for additional payments for absences.

Beginning in January 2022, paid absences will follow the child's authorization. Child care providers must enter any absences in the CCBIS system for any day children are not in attendance to help with accountability and future monitoring of attendance records.

Reminder! First Steps Background Screening/Fingerprint Changes

As of November 1, 2021, the registration code for [background screening/fingerprinting](#) for First Steps enrollment has changed. The new Missouri Automated Criminal History Site (MACHS) registration code is **8918**.

Child Care Background Check — Completion Rate Increases

Since launching the OOC, the Background Screening Team increased the rate of processed child care provider background screens by 30 percent! During October 2021, the average processing time for background screenings

while reducing isolation

- Identifying and helping licensed family child care programs access resources
- Highlighting quality improvement services such as training and education/scholarship opportunities, business support, technical assistance, leadership development, and more
- Coaching and mentoring such as problem solving, providing encouragement, and providing access to materials and ideas to enhance children's learning
- Helping family child care providers find their voice, encouraging family child care providers to share their story, and helping them understand legislation that may impact them

Please view [the flyer here](#) and for questions, please contact FCCN directly at FCCNDirector@mochildcareaware.org.

Child Care Background Check Website

Attention child care providers! If you haven't already, please visit and bookmark the child care [background check](#)

of licensed, regulated, and registered child care providers was three to five days.

Registration for CYY 2022 is Now Open!

The dates for the Conference on the Young Years (CYY) 2022 are Thursday, March 10th and Friday, March 11th. The conference will be held virtually and at no-cost to participants. Visit [the event website](#) to register and learn more about the conference. Watch our registration video (below) to assist you in accessing the event website and completing your registration.



[process webpage](#). Here you can find important announcements, steps for completing a comprehensive criminal background check, required forms, and frequently asked questions.

Did you Know?

The [Early Connections website](#) has a series of parent training videos called the "Thrive in Five" with Dr. Dave Schramm from the University of Missouri. This video series ranges on topics from potty training to helping children overcome fear. You can find all of his videos on the [Training Opportunities for Families](#) webpage.

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships in order to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.



Students graduating from the new EarlystART program.

This month's Spotlight on Success is on EarlystART in Kansas City. On October 28, 2021, the early learning center launched a new name and new brand that better reflects the center's mission. Its partnerships in the community and with local businesses and families was especially important in the rebranding. Together they are working to ensure a bright future for the children in their community. The relaunch shows their commitment to a distinctive, arts-infused curriculum and environment. The program worked with families and community members to design the new look. You can watch their [new introductory video here](#) and read [the press release here](#). Check out EarlystART's [new landing page](#) for more information about the organization and its important mission and vision.

Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) Update



The Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) provides funding over three years to coordinate a more effective, high-quality early childhood system that better prepares Missouri children for success.

Each month the Office of Childhood hosts a live webinar to provide updates and information about the PDG B-5 to stakeholders. A [recording](#) and the [PowerPoint slides](#) from the most recent webinar are available in case you are unable to attend and wish to hear the information.

A [PDG B-5 dashboard](#) is also updated monthly. This dashboard provides an at-a-glance look at priority areas, budget status, and key accomplishments.

PDG B-5 Monthly Webinar

The OOC will not host a PDG B-5 Stakeholder in December. We wish you a happy holiday season and we will return in January 2022.

Archived Editions of Childhood Connections

Visit the Office of Childhood website to find [previous editions](#) of the Childhood Connections.

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